

Chairwomen Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Aram Ayalon and I'm a resident of New Britain.

I am testifying today to express how disappointed I am in Governor Lamont's proposed budget and to urge you to reject H.B. 6659.

If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that investing in education will always be invaluable. We saw the detrimental effects that a lack of equitable funding had on our students when some districts like New Britain were struggling to provide a high-quality education such as accessible to Wi-Fi and technology for their students during COVID, and we have seen how much the infusion of ESSER funding has helped those same districts.

The reality is that ESSER funds will run out, but our students' needs will remain. New Britain schools, for example, still suffer from shortage of staff and large class size. I want our students to still have an adequately staffed counseling department, the chance to learn from the brightest teachers, and school buildings that are updated, healthy, and safe learning environments. All of this is only possible if we commit to providing equitable and full funding today, so when federal ESSER funds expire, our districts are not scrambling to fund these basic necessities that give our students a high-quality education.

The governor's proposed budget does not seem to address any of these concerns and instead encourages districts to continue exclusively relying on temporary ESSER relief funds to ensure the needs of our students are met. This is very troubling to me and I do not support this strategy.

It is imperative that we do everything we can to fund our students fully and equitably. This is why I strongly urge you to reject the governor's proposed budget and instead pass H.B. 5003, which would give our students the reliable, long-term funding solution they need in order to have access to the resources they need and deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Aram Ayalon
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